Blaxhall Village Newsletter

Autumn 2025

Darkness and Light

The older I get, the more time really does seem to fly, and the last 3 months are no exception. It doesn't seem 5 minutes since I was churning out our Summer edition of the newsletter, but here we are reporting on Bonfire Night and advertising Christmas Parties!

The aforementioned Bonfire Night (right), organised by BCOST and held on Stone Common, was a tremendous success, see inside for more details and photos. Our other photo is of the newly decorated Village Hall, looking resplendent after its new paint job. Having attended a PC meeting last week, when the paint was barely dry, I can confirm it's as good as it looks. We have more photos inside, as well as the other news from the church, pub, council and a ghostly history feature.

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Breaking News in Blaxhall!

We all love the Blaxhall Carol Service and I've been researching new readings to go with the old favourite carols…….HOWEVER……..it is almost certain now that the tower won't be finished in time so we must make contingency plans! Of course our wonderful Village Hall will come in to its own again but WHAT IF:

- The "service" became an immersive nativity experience?
- There were real animals? Any offers of suitable animals gratefully received. Sadly Nigella doesn't have donkeys any more but the churchyard sheep will be coming and remember, no-one really knew what animals were there! Any spare oxen anyone???!!
- All singing enthusiasts could take to the stage and lead their favourite carol? Rev Rob would be able to provide amplification, I'm sure! Karaoke Christmas, anyone???
- Everyone dressed up as their favourite nativity character??? How many little angels/shepherds/Kings are there out there? Grandchildren or great nieces welcome! and anyone produced a baby "Jesus" recently? Apart from my daughter ……..OK, I'm working on her!
- Visitors to the "maternity" ward took real gifts to be donated Christmas charities? "Shelter" and "Crisis" could benefit or do you have a better idea???
- Wetting the Baby's head was celebrated "Blaxhall Style"? There are always refreshments after the Carol Service, so come along and ENJOY!

Would you still come???

Ideas on a postcard, please, to miranda@thesummerhouseinsnape.co.uk

…..and WATCH THIS SPACE for:

- CAROLS IN BLAXHALL
- 21st December
- 3pm

(Almost certainly) in the Village Hall

Blaxhall Nativity with Carols
Blaxhall Village Hall
on
21st December
at 3pm
Outdoor Crib with the Church Sheep
Come dressed as your favourite Nativity character!
On-stage stable/creche with toys and teatowels (compulsory headgear!)
Singalong to your favourite carols and hear the real story of Christmas
Mulled wine and refreshments
Donations to The Children's Society (money) or the foodbank (Christmas fare)
Dress up warmly!

Parish Council

As winter is about to begin and the weather changes thoughts return to the problems of flooding in the Village. Hopefully this year we are ahead of the game. After last years work by local farmers to improve the ditches and grips we had a vast improvement of the flooding issues. The Parish Council's continued interaction with farmers, county and district councils has helped bring about a better understanding of the problems.

The day before the very heavy rain recently New Shoots were busy carving out huge furrows at several field entrances to divert rain from the roads, which was very effective (see page 9).
A big thank you to New Shoots for their continued efforts.

Also a big thank you to BCOST for arranging a lovely bonfire evening with a really good bonfire and super eats and drinks. It was very well attended and had a lovely atmosphere.

Other News. Work to convert the former Youth Hostel back to its original use as a school is progressing well. We look forward to welcoming Compass Schools to the village.

Village Hall

We are very pleased to report that the painting of the hall has been completed. The outside is now completely protected and the inside is looking fabulous (see P9). The new colour is vibrant and the quality of the work is excellent.

Christmas is suddenly very close and we look forward to the village party.
To remind everyone the party is Saturday 13th December. There will be a Christmas buffet supper, licensed bar (cash only) and music by local band Six Pack.
Tickets are £17.50. Available from me before 7th December on 688192 or 07747 023995.

Wishing you all a very merry Christmas.

Graham

In times of great change all around us one happy constant is the Blaxhall Ship. Since the new landlord and landlady, Darren and Carly, took over the running of the pub over six months ago they have continued to steer the business with confidence and commitment. We have had many positive comments both face to face and on Trip Advisor.

What could be more welcoming on a cold winter's day than a roaring fire and friendly greeting from the staff?

With the continuation of traditional music and events as well as the introduction of new features we have seen the monthly quiz nights go from strength to strength with record numbers in November. With a special offer of food at £8 a head and contribution of £2 towards the winners pot this is proving a great hit. Please do book in early if you wish to attend to avoid disappointment.

Recent Indian and Chinese food events have also been extremely popular, again do book in for future events.

Also don't forget Christmas is coming up!

Events are listed on blackboards in the pub and on Facebook.

Our opening times have been seasonally adjusted to:

We now open from 4pm on Tuesday

24.12.25 - 15:00-22:00
25.12.25 - 11:00-14:00
26.12.25 - 12:00-20:00
27.12.25 - 12:00-22:00
28.12.25 - 12:00-22:00
29.12.25 - 12:00-22:00
30.12.25 - 12:00-22:00
31.12.25 - 12:00-01:00
01.01.26 - 12:00-20:00

To Haunt, or Not to Haunt ...

Back in the Dark Ages, when I was a nipper, I had a number of fascinations - Britains farm toys, Action Men, Star Wars toys, dinosaurs, castles, ... but one of the more enduring subjects, was things that go bump in the night. When I was around 10 I bought the book pictured right, or rather, I made my mother's and grandparents' lives a misery until one of them bought it for me. Until recently, I hadn't seen it for 40 years, but always remembered that properly spooky cover picture, as well as the many other creepy illustrations within.

Nowadays, paranormal investigation programmes tend to be fake, scripted, hammed-up dross with clowns like Derek Acorah telling more porkie pies than a Donald Trump press conference, but back in the day we had proper documentaries, like Arthur C. Clarke's Mysterious World, examining the subject in reasonably sensible fashion.

All of which brings me to the point. I often drag up such old documentaries on Youtube, to watch in the background while doing other things. Ultimately, whilst I've heard a few genuinely interesting cases on said programmes, I still remain pretty sceptical, not least because I live in a 200+ year old house and have never encountered so much as a gently moving curtain. Nor, for that matter, in all the years I've been here has any friend or neighbour brought to my attention strange goings on in their similarly old abode.

Some of Blaxhall's houses have sections that are 400 years old, and there are dozens of cottages of 150+ years, plus old farm buildings and various locations where tragedies occurred. Every one of our quaint little homes will have seen many an unpleasant passing, including numerous children, dying from long-since-forgotten diseases or the aftermath of accidents, both of which were horribly common in centuries past. Then there were the countless adults who would have died at home, sometimes from long, painful causes. On top of those, at least a couple of dozen of our houses have witnessed some pretty grizzly suicides, old men hanging themselves in stairways and the like. We've had teenage girls running from buildings with their clothes in flames, before succumbing to their injuries, children scolded to death at home, killed by windmill sails and crushed in farm machinery, men mortally wounded by speeding wagons or trains and even poor old James Smith who was struck by lightning.

Young Edith Smith ran from this doorway on fire a few years before this photo was taken

All in all then, we really ought to have our fair share of spooks and spectres, be it a singed looking James eternally walking the road to Grove Farm on stormy nights, farmer George Skeet, covered in blood from a cut throat, spotted in the corner of your eye gliding past the back of a barn, or an ethereal 17 year-old Edith Smith, engulfed in flames, forever running from the door of Blaxhall Hall. Then, of course, there are the lost buildings. One of the theories around ghostly sightings, rather than restless, tortured souls, is the so called "stonetape theory", which suggests

that events can somehow be recorded by the fabric of their surroundings and "replayed" in the future. The best known example is the day in 1953 when plumber Harry Martindale was working in the basement of Treasurer's House, York. Feeling impelled to turn around, he was greeted by a column of Roman soldiers, marching out of one wall, across the floor, and into another. He said they seemed completely oblivious to his presence, and bizarrely, were only visible from the knees upwards. Later excavations revealed a roman road some 12 inches below the floor of the basement, suggesting the legionaries were still marching the original road, perhaps to lose their lives in battle some 1800 years ago.

If there's any truth to the theory, people entering the village on Snape Lane ought to occasionally be greeted by the dramatic sight of one of the tallest windmills in Suffolk, overwhelmed by flames reaching high into the night sky. Or, perhaps a few seconds earlier on their journey, they might catch a glimpse of the houses and inhabitants at Pump Square, Poplartree Cottages, the big house of farmer John Flatt, or even parishioners making their way to the long-since gone Dunningworth church. More recently, on Top Road (Church Road), the impressive Church Farm was another to meet a fiery end back in early 80s. Old, thatched and imposing, it was one of bigger houses in Blaxhall prior to its demise, but again I'm not aware of any apparitions or strange happenings around its former site.

Church Farm was, for me, one of the village's most appealing houses. It was obviously very old, but I've heard no reports of its many residents lingering in the area.

Sadly, for the romantics, none of locations or events seem to have resulted in a haunting, but I'd love to be proven wrong, so if you have a Blaxhall ghost experience to share, please email me; shane@blaxhall.com

Cross about Crossing

Readers may remember that we were talking about lost roads a few months back, specifically White Cross Lane. Well, we're briefly visiting a partly-lost road for this edition. It's the route that continues straight ahead at Red House corner, rather than turning left for Campsea Ashe. In years gone by it was very much a normal road (below) and it still looks that way on Google maps (right) although it's wrongly labelled as Station Road.

It crosses the railway at Blackstock and eventually used to emerge at Wickham Market five-cross-ways, but now comes out near the A12 slip road. It stopped being a "normal road" in the 1960s, when the crossing guard was removed. It's likely that this coincided with the closure of the Framlingham branch line, which spurred off near the crossing, *(cont. P8)*

Board Games Afternoon

The board games afternoons at the village hall will be running on the last Sunday of every month from November until the end of March between 2.30 and 4.30pm. Come and join your neighbours for tea, coffee, snacks, games, table tennis and good chat. We have a decent selection of board games but do bring along any of your particular favourites.

A £1 donation towards the cost of hall hire would be welcomed, but is not essential.

Bonfire Party

BCOST organised a bonfire party at Stone Common on Saturday the 8th of November, which proved a great success.

Around 40 people came along on a cool, but fine autumn evening to enjoy the fire and share mulled cider, hot dogs and jacket potatoes, and a even a few sparklers!

Many thanks to all those who put in the time and work to make it happen.

BCOST Autumn Update

BCOST volunteers have been busy over the past couple of months with regular work parties at both Stone Common and Jasper's Pightle engaged in tidying up and habitat management. At Stone Common we have been cutting up waste wire from dismantled fences ready for recycling, while as Jasper's Pightle we have been raking up the cut bracken to encourage the recovery of the mixed grass sward.

At both locations we have begun the work of clearing around, and mulching, the young hedging we have planted over the past few years – ongoing work which will keep us busy over the winter ahead. Work parties are held fortnightly on Sunday afternoons. If you would like to join us, you would be warmly welcomed: email BCOST Hon Secretary Eve Rossor for details (everossor@gmail.com).

At the start of November we also conducted our regular twice-yearly litter pick along the roadsides and verges around the village.

The final work party of the year is set for 7 December at Jasper's Pightle, but keep an eye on our website for the latest news and updates; https://blaxhallcommons.com/dates-for-the-diary

(from page 6) as it was common for one man to double up as gate keeper and signalman. The gates were apparently locked for a while, but that was removed and for several decades now you've still been able to use the road in a vehicle, using the phone at the gates to check whether it's safe to cross, which several people I know regularly did. Recently, however, a sign has appeared announcing that the crossing is for use by "authorised personnel" only. You can still get through with a bike, or on foot, but both the Ordnance Survey and SCC Definitive Rights of Way map are still showing it as a proper road, and it was still signposted as a by-road until recently, which is obviously pointless if you get obstructed half way along. I emailed SCC Highways, asking if the road had been officially closed, and if so by who, and why Blaxhall PC wasn't informed if that's the case, but received no reply. If anyone is elaborate on what's happened, or why, please email shane@blaxhall.com

The signal box at Blackstock

Parish Councillors

Graham Bowles	01728 688192 (Chairman)	Karen Baker	01728 688200
Shane Pictor	01728 885215	Ray Herring	01728 746337
Jonathan Cutting	01728 885115	Mark Oakley	01728 687507
Graham Atkinson	01728 687589	Maria Cooke	
Joanne Peters	01394 459400 (Parish Clerk)		

Suffolk Coastal District Councillor - Tim Wilson 07823 587947 tim.wilson@eastsuffolk.gov.uk
Suffolk County Councillor - Andrew Reid 07545 423799 andrew.reid@suffolk.gov.uk
Copies of minutes and agendas can be found at http://blaxhall.onesuffolk.net/parish-council/

Parish Council meetings are held in the Village Hall at 7.30 and are open to all parishioners, the public and press. The 2025 dates are: **Wednesday 8th January, Wednesday 5th March, Wednesday 7th May, Wednesday 2nd July, Wednesday 3rd September** and **Wednesday 5th November.**

Community Transport – "Connecting Communities" **01728 635938**. The service booking line operates 08.45am to 4pm, Mon-Fri. You can also book a pick-up with "Katch" bus service by using the app, or by phoning **01728 635939**.

Blaxhall Commons & Open Spaces Charitable Trust – www.blaxhallcommonstrust.org
For contact details of all trustees ring Mark Oakley **01728 687507**

The **Mobile Library** has stopped visiting Blaxhall as of January 2025, but currently still stops at Tunstall. For details of where/when use the website or phone number below.

Large print, Audio & Childrens' books, also CDs and DVDs are available for a small charge.
Contact Pete Wells or Helen Hudson via help@suffolklibraries.co.uk, or visit the website **http://suffolkreads.onesuffolk.net/libraries-and-mobiles/**or phone **01473 584563**

To put something in the Village Noticeboard, please ring Graham Bowles 01728 688192
To put something in the Newsletter email to shane@blaxhall.com tel. 01728 885215

Allotment information contact Sophie Martin on 07724 356916, Blaxhall.Allotments@gmail.com

Tree Warden - Joy Shaw, joyjoyshaw@gmail.com, 01728 688309

Previous editions of the newsletter can be found online at **archive.org/details/@blaxhall24** or visit **archive.org** and search **"blaxhall newsletter"**

Newsletter Contact shane@blaxhall.com

Deadline for next Newsletter - 10th February